

## HANDOUT VE 18

### JoAnn Elam EVERYDAY PEOPLE

From JoAnn's notebooks:

PO Movie

This is what I want to get across:

(1) the difference between subs and regulars

the fact that the post office is trying harder to turn regulars back into subs  
and that this is part of industrial development and automation (see *Labor & Monopoly Capital*)  
and this is why you don't get your mail.

(2) social context—carriers relate to different expectations from

a) patrons

b) other carriers

c) management

re: the length & intensity of the workday

(3) Is there such a thing as he fight to do a good job?

What about "for the good of the Service"?

The Sanctity of the Mail

Themes, in a nutshell:

Reconciling struggle and misbehavior

Conflict as part of daily life —class, race, sex

Class Portrait: we're all alike and we're all different

Humor for survival

The postal triangle: management./carrier/patron

The patron wants a regular & boss wants a sub

I feel like I have to start out very negative and cynical, since that's the popular mood. Everyone hates the Post Office. And Mailmen. Throwing away mail, burning it, dumping it, hiding it. Delivering it to other people. Sending it back.

So I'm trying to bring people in closer to see how ~~people~~ carriers do the job. And to see how people can mess up. Also I want to ~~pull~~ them to pullback a little and see how industrial development affects us. But the presentation is totally subjective. This is the way I feel (but I'm not the only one.).

-----  
There is disjuncture between daily work (shop floor) and union actions—pickets & parades—symbolic walking.

Contrasts:

Inside (office) / outside (street)

Sub/regular

Winter/summer

Male/female

White/black

Labor/management

Subs & Regulars                      --new & old

Misbehavior-opportunities

People & Dogs (on the route)

I hazards in

I in the street

Men & women carriers  
The boss (mgt & supervisor)

I hazards in  
I the office

[going postal—CK]

Why employees shoot their supervisors

- 1) They are in danger of losing a job and they're not getting another for the same pay.
- 2) The supervisor is an asshole, rigid or unfair.
- 3) The grievance procedure draws out the process, so there's time to stew about what's happening.
- 4) There's something personal going on, some personal betrayal
- 5) The class struggle has somehow become personalized. But then, it is anyway.

Themes of my PO movie

Individuality vs. conformity  
Feeling excluded vs. belonging  
Independence  
Autonomy vs. control

Class portrait: using individual experiences to describe a class experience

We want a job that does something real

\*We don't want to be the boss  
but we want to be independent

this kind of attitude makes the dictatorship of the proletariat difficult to achieve

The job requires independence to do it, but the supervisor is the Postal bureaucracy, total autocrat

You're on your own, but the route is determined.

We have to get the job done, but the boss controls how to do it.

Working class dilemma—wanting to be told what to do and (at the same time) wanting to be able to do what they please.

Wanting a leader but wanting to [go against/oppose] the leader

The struggle over control of the job was lost long ago.

Visual

Routine vs. monotony (it can become boring)

Repetition with variety w/out variety why it doesn't

Connect object with people

Practiced control vs. automation get into the rhythm

Natural rhythms/pace vs. machine-controlled there is variety within the routine

Variety of tasks

Variety of mail

*Selected by Chuck Kleinhans, August 2011, [chuckkle@northwestern.edu](mailto:chuckkle@northwestern.edu)*

For more info: google search <http://chicagofilmarchives.org/> + elam